

DEMOLITION

It is the intent of the demolition section of the ***Design Review Guidelines*** to ensure that property owners consider the role which existing buildings play in defining the character of the community. In addition, certain buildings possess individual significance as examples of certain architectural styles and periods in the City's history. Williamsburg has experienced a high level of demolition activity within the last seventy years, which significantly altered the character of certain areas in the community. In addition, as a result of the restoration of the Colonial capitol, the City's redevelopment efforts, and continuing development pressures on land adjacent to the Historic Area, demolition has removed a sizeable portion of the City's post-Colonial era historic fabric. Historic resources, which are especially threatened, are from the city's depleted supply of Victorian and early twentieth century buildings. These non-Colonial historic buildings contribute to the City's character and are evidence of the City's evolutionary process between the Colonial period and the present time.

A 1930 survey map prepared in conjunction with the Restoration project and a buildings map from the 1940's illustrate the level of clearance which has occurred within the last fifty years in the areas surrounding the Colonial Williamsburg Historic Area. Of the 106 buildings, which existed in the area bounded by Virginia Avenue, Richmond Road, North Boundary Street and the CSX Railroad right-of-way in 1930, 78% have been lost to this date. All of the buildings, which existed on York Street, have been lost. 62% of the 57 buildings, which existed in Peacock Hill in 1930, have been lost to date. 56% of the 43 buildings, which existed in area of South Boundary Street, Ireland Street, and South Henry Street in 1930, have been lost to date. And of the 30 buildings, which existed on South England Street and in the Colonial Extension subdivision in 1930, 66% have been lost to date. On average, the city has lost 72% of the buildings, which existed in the areas ringing the Historic Area in 1930. It is not known how many buildings, which existed prior to 1930 in the area now known as the Historic Area, were lost to make the restoration project possible. Redevelopment pressures and the phenomenon of demolition by neglect continue to threaten the City's remaining 19th-century and early twentieth-century historic buildings.

The Architectural Review Board reviews all proposals to demolish buildings in the **Architectural Preservation District**. Prior to submitting a proposal for demolition of a building listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (Chapter XII, Appendix 6), it is recommended that property owners analyze the situation carefully and explore alternatives to demolition. Depending on the condition of the building and the nature of the intended land use, property owners should consider the potential of the building for rehabilitation. Many historic buildings are suitable for adaptive re-use projects and the Rehabilitation section of the ***Design Review Guidelines*** outlines this process. The Architectural Review Board may make recommendations to the Planning Commission and the Board of Zoning Appeals for exceptions to standard yard requirements, off-street parking requirements, and open space and landscape requirements, for significant buildings in older neighborhoods which do not meet current zoning requirements.

If relocation is determined to be necessary as the only means of preserving the building, then property owners should refer to the Relocation section of the ***Design Review Guidelines***.

If, after every other option is considered, the property owner still wishes to demolish the building, the procedures outlined in the Architecture Review Article of the Zoning Ordinance (Chapter XII, Appendix 5) must be followed. The applicant must apply to the Architectural Review Board for the right to demolish the building. At this time, if the building is listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (Chapter XII, Appendix 6), the applicant should submit interior and exterior photographs of the building and site to the Planning Department, or the property owner should allow the City access to the property to photograph the building and site. It is recommended that the applicant check with the Planning Department for available information on the property to avoid duplication of reporting.

Many factors need to be weighed by the Architectural Review Board when reviewing requests for demolition in the **Architectural Preservation District**, many of which are listed in Section 21-855(c) of the Zoning Ordinance (Chapter XII, Appendix 5). These factors include whether or not the building or the neighborhood in which it is located is listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (Chapter XII, Appendix 6), the historic and architectural value of the building, the effect that the demolition will have on the surrounding neighborhood, the type and quality of the project that will replace the building, the Comprehensive Plan's goals for historic preservation, the condition of the building, and the economic feasibility of restoring the building. The Board must strike the proper balance between preserving buildings that make important contributions to the history and character of the City and surrounding neighborhood, and allowing for new development in the Architecture Preservation District. A listing of buildings in the **Architectural Preservation District** that are 50 years old or older has been compiled to assist the Board in its deliberations (Chapter XII, Appendix 7).

If the Architectural Review Board denies the demolition request, the applicant may appeal to the City Council. If demolition is denied by the City Council, the property owner has the right to demolish the building if no buyer has been found for the property within a stipulated time period after a bonafide effort has been made to sell the property under the procedures outlined in Section 21-858(a)(3) of the Zoning Ordinance. An alternative to this process is for the applicant to appeal the City Council's decision to the Circuit Court.